

REMARKS

Please reconsider the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering this application.

Drawings

Applicant notes that the drawings were neither accepted nor objected to by the Examiner on the Office Action Summary page mailed May 4, 2006. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to indicate whether the formal drawings submitted on October 31, 2003, are acceptable.

Disposition of Claims

Claims 1-24 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 6, 12, 15, 19, 23, and 24 are independent. The remaining claims depend, either directly or indirectly, from claim 1, 6, 12, 15, or 19.

Claim Amendments

Claims 1, 2, 11, and 14 have been amended to correct minor typographical and grammatical errors. No new subject matter has been added by way of these amendments, as support for these amendments is present in the original claims. These amendments have not been made in view of prior art or any other statutory basis for patentability.

Objection(s)

Claims 1, 2, and 11 are objected to for minor informalities. As discussed above, claims 1, 2, and 11 have been amended to clarify the minor typographical and dependency errors. Accordingly, withdrawal of these objections is respectfully requested.

Rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. § 103*Claims 1-4, 6, 10, 11, 16-18, 21, and 22*

Claims 1-4, 6, 10, 11, 16-18, 21, and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent Application No. 2003/0217130 (“Tang”) in view of U.S. Patent Application No. 2003/0233380 (“Coss”). For the reasons set forth below, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Tang is not valid prior art to this application as evidenced¹ by the attached declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131. As stated in the declaration, the present invention was reduced to practice prior to the effective date of Tang (*i.e.*, prior to May 16, 2002). In view of the above, Tang may not be used to support the aforementioned 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 5, 7-9, 12, 13, 15, 20, and 24

Claims 5, 7-9, 12, 13, 15, 20, and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Tang in view of Coss and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,578,131 (“Larson”). For the reasons set forth below, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, Tang may not be used to support the aforementioned 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 14, 19, and 23

Claims 14, 19, and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Tang in view of Coss and Larson, and further in view of U.S. Patent Application No. 2003/0159132 ("Barnett"). For the reasons set forth below, this rejection is respectfully traversed.


As discussed above, Tang may not be used to support the aforementioned 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 03226/330001).

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments (Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131)